

FARMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Policy Number:
116-12 **Effective Date:**
08/14/2018

Subject:
Animal Control Unit

Approved by:

Steven D. Hebbe, Chief of Police



PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for the Farmington Police Department's Animal Control Unit.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Farmington Police Department to have an Animal Control Unit which is dedicated to providing the citizens of Farmington with the best possible service related to animals and the care of animals. The Animal Control Unit (ACU) will respond to animal related calls including but not limited to barking dogs, animals running at large, suspected animal cruelty cases, injured animals, animal bites as well as numerous other situations involving domesticated and some wild animals. They are also tasked with non-animal related calls, such as but not limited to, private property crashes, tows, traffic control, lost or found property, criminal damage to property, and minor petty misdemeanors with no suspect present.

Our Animal Control Officers (ACO) will receive specialized training in animal safety, handling and apprehension techniques, disease control, euthanasia, and investigation techniques.

PROCEDURE:

A. Animals Running At Large

1. The Animal Control Officer will capture and retain the animal using the most humane practices available. ACOs should scan, when possible, the captured animal for microchips to ascertain possible ownership.
2. Handling after capture. ACOs will utilize the most humane handling methods possible. Cats should not be caught or moved by catch pole unless as a last resort.
3. When capture is not feasible, the ACO will follow the animal home and secure the animal in its own yard or pasture.
4. If the ACO is unable to secure the animal safely in the yard/pasture, the ACO will capture the animal with the assistance of another ACO or a commissioned officer.

5. If prior contact with the animal/household is unknown, the ACO will make every reasonable attempt to capture and impound the animal at the Farmington Regional Animal Shelter (FRAS). The ACO should utilize assistance from another ACO or a commissioned officer if necessary.
6. If the animal owner is known, or identified, the ACO will make contact with the owner in person, by phone or by posting a notification-of-pick-up/impound report on the owner's door.
7. In cases where the animal cannot be captured or returned home, the ACO will track the animal to as safe a location as possible before disengaging.
8. Animals at large exhibiting signs of illness or injury, including cats and other domestic stray animals, i.e. dogs, rabbits and ferrets, will be impounded at the FRAS. Wildlife should not be brought to the FRAS, if it is in an area where it is deemed a danger to the public, ACOs can relocate the wildlife and let nature take its course. ACOs can also request an officer to put the animal down on scene. Game and Fish should be notified of the wildlife and given the chance to respond.

B. Animals Being Held by a Citizen or Business

1. The ACO will contact the reporting party holding the found animal to determine where the animal was found and how long the reporting party had the animal.
2. If the reporting party is not available, the ACO will obtain information from their Mobile Data Computer or the Communications Center regarding the location of where the animal is being kept.
3. The ACO will then capture and restrain the animal using the most humane practices.
4. When possible, the ACO will take the animal to the FRAS and submit the animal for intake. If the animal cannot be taken to the shelter, i.e. wild non-domesticated animal, it will be dealt with in the most humane way possible.
5. The above policy does not apply to domestic cats.

C. Barking Dogs

1. The ACO will respond to noisy dog complaints from known reporting parties as well as anonymous complainants.
2. In an effort to assist the anonymous complainant, the ACO shall attempt contact with the dog owner if the dog owner can be located. A notice of complaint should be issued if dog owner/custodian is known, even if the ACO does not have specific information that is normally needed.
3. The ACO will contact the dog owner and issue a notice of complaint to the dog owner/custodian as a first step in an attempt to resolve the problem.
4. Notice of the complaint should be given in person. If the owner/custodian is unavailable, the ACO will place the warning notice on the door of his/her residence.
5. To issue a warning or summons, the owner's exact address, description of the dog(s) and date/time frame of the barking nuisance is needed from the reporting party.

6. In all circumstances a Barking Dog report will be taken to document what occurred, unless a supervisor directs otherwise.

D. Animal Cruelty/Neglect

1. Anytime the ACO picks up a stray animal or is called to investigate a possible case of neglect or cruelty, they will thoroughly check the animal's health and living conditions:
 - a. Physical deterioration including body conditioning, grooming, teeth, eyes, nose, nails, injuries old or new, open sores;
 - b. Physical injuries including bruising, broken bones, bleeding;
 - c. Absence of potable water in the animal's living area;
 - d. Lack of housing, sheltering or improper housing;
 - e. Obvious inhumane treatment including short chain, improper tethering, kennel size, too tight of a collar and weather conditions;
 - f. Unsafe/unsanitary conditions including dangerous debris in yard, excessive animal waste or hazardous materials;
 - g. Abandonment.
2. If possible, the ACO should observe the animal from a clear view location prior to contacting the owner/custodian.
3. Any time an animal is suffering or in danger, the ACO shall use their discretion concerning the course of action, keeping in mind the welfare of the animal.
4. Any time an animal is impounded as a result of neglect or cruelty, the ACO should, if a suspect is identified, file charges as soon as possible.
5. If the owner or resident of the property is not at home, and the animal cannot be seen from clear view, the ACO may enter the yard for a welfare check. However, the ACO must have articulable knowledge or a reasonable belief that an animal is suffering or is in serious need of veterinary assistance. Food and water may be provided to the animal if needed. If the animal needs immediate removal in exigent circumstances, it will be placed in a safekeeping status for impoundment at the FRAS.
6. The ACO will document the investigation by photographing the animal and property on which the animal is found. The ACO will utilize the department issued camera and log them into evidence as policy and procedure direct.
7. The ACO will document all founded cruelty or neglect cases regardless of the enforcement action taken.
8. Along with standard information, all supplemental neglect or cruelty reports should specifically include:
 - a. A complete description of the animal;

- b. The animal's physical condition;
- c. The animal's behavior;
- d. A description of the animal's living conditions;
- e. Statements from defendant, witnesses, veterinarians and other persons having information about the incident or condition of the animal;
- f. Weather conditions, if applicable;
- g. Veterinarian care or lack thereof and;
- h. Other pertinent information from witnesses or statements from the owner/custodian.

9. Animals in Unattended Vehicles

- a. Because the temperature inside a vehicle during hot weather can quickly kill or seriously injure an animal, all complaints of this nature will be handled as soon as possible. The ACO must evaluate each situation quickly and carefully to determine whether the animal is in immediate danger.
 - Signs of Danger
Signs of extreme danger for animals in vehicles in hot weather include excessive panting, inflammation of the gums/mucous membranes, frantic behavior, unresponsiveness and convulsions.
 - Vehicle Temperature
All Animal Services Vehicles are equipped with issued laser temperature gages. For legal reasons and to determine whether the animal is in danger, the temperature within the vehicle must be taken and recorded; any temperature of 85 degrees F or higher is considered a danger to the animal. This is accomplished by utilizing the laser to ascertain the vehicle's temperature through the glass.
 - Life-Saving Techniques
If the animal is unresponsive, convulsing or is close to death, it must be removed immediately from the vehicle and its temperature quickly reduced.
 - If forced entry into a vehicle is necessary to remove an animal in danger of dying, the ACO should promptly call for police assistance. If possible, a commissioned officer should be present while the ACO forcibly enters a locked vehicle. ACOs should use the most effective and efficient way to get into vehicle, causing the least amount of damage.
 - Once the animal is out of the vehicle, it should be soaked with cool water, focusing around the neck and head and transported immediately to an approved veterinarian. The animal's temperature should be taken as soon as possible to document its condition.
 - If no owner is present, the ACO will post on the vehicle a notice of impoundment.

10. Animals Not in Danger

- a. If the animal in the unattended vehicle is not in immediate danger, the ACO should attempt to find the owner. If the ACO is unable to locate the owner, a notice will be left on the vehicle. If necessary, the ACO will continue to check on the condition of the animal until the situation is resolved.

E. Sick or Injured Domestic Stray Animals

1. The ACO will pick up sick or injured stray domestic animals as soon as possible.
2. The animal's condition will be assessed on scene. If necessary, the ACO will transport the animal to the FRAS and/or the veterinarian as soon as possible. If after hours, a message will be left for the veterinarian.
3. All appropriate FRAS paperwork and documents will be fully filled out and signed when required.
4. The FRAS will be notified in advance either by the ACO, or the ACO can request that the dispatch to make the call.
5. If the animal has any identification tags or microchip, the ACO will trace the information and notify the owner as soon as possible.
6. If the owner can be reached prior to transport, the ACO can transport the animal to the primary veterinarian of the owner/custodian, if located within the City of Farmington. Otherwise, the animal will be transferred to the FRAS or the owner can come pick it up.
7. If the animal is unable to be reasonably stabilized and the owner is not reachable, the ACO and the FRAS's veterinarian should concur as to whether to euthanize the animal immediately.

F. Domestic Animal Bites

1. A Bite Report must be completed for all incidents in which the bite of a domestic animal breaks the skin of the human victim. All appropriate FRAS paperwork and documents will be fully filled out and signed when required.
2. Ten-day (10) quarantine must be observed in cases involving dogs and cat bites.
 - a. For animals residing in the City of Farmington, the quarantine is completed at the FRAS, but can, in certain cases, be completed at the owner's residence or at a veterinarian clinic.
 - To quarantine at home the owner must have current rabies vaccination and the ability to confine the animal. The animal must not be exposed to any new people or new animals not previously exposed to at the time of the bite. ACOs discretion. (See Sec. 5)
 - b. The animal owner's name, address, and phone number(s) will be documented.

3. The animal owner may elect euthanasia, which may only be administered by a licensed veterinarian or euthanasia technician, after the required 10 day quarantine period.
4. All veterinarian information, boarding information, euthanasia status and/or any testing will be documented in the Bite Report or supplemental report.
5. Even if the owner has current vaccines the ACO may order quarantine at the FRAS in the following cases:
 - a. The ACO believes the animal owner may not or cannot keep the animal properly confined at home;
 - b. The owner/custodian or household has a prior history of animals running at large or dangerous and aggressive animals or any other history that would indicate lack of responsibility; for liability no home quarantines;
 - c. The animal was running at large at the time of the bite;
 - d. The ownership of the animal is unknown; for liability no home quarantines;
 - e. Based on the severity of the situation;
 - f. A residence that does not contain a secured and/or enclosed yard, such as an apartment, condominium or townhouse.
 - g. Any other issue the ACO deems necessary.
6. If the victim is not the owner of the bite animal, the ACO will check the animal's health during the quarantine time and notify the victim if possible. The ACO should tell the victim that the animal is still healthy, if the animal is so, and will advise them to contact a medical doctor or hospital if the animal is deceased or showing signs of infection.
7. All bite animals will be checked by the ACO at the end of the ten-day quarantine period. If the animal is healthy, it can be released from quarantine, after obtaining a clean bill of health from a veterinarian.
8. If an animal under quarantine has exhibited any symptoms or suspicious behavior, do not release the quarantine and contact the State Health Department as soon as possible.
9. Animals that die before the end of the quarantine period will be submitted to the State Health Department lab for testing. The FRAS is responsible for the processing and shipping of the animal.
10. Bite reports are considered closed after the animal is released from quarantine or euthanized and tested for rabies.
11. In cases where the animal is not found, the bite report will be closed after ten (10) days. ACOs will also update shift members of the animal's description and last known location. The FRAS will also be notified of the information in event that animal is brought in by a citizen or other ACO.

G. Euthanasia Service

1. All ACOs will be trained and certified by the State of New Mexico as Euthanasia Technicians with the State Sheltering Board in gas chamber and lethal injection.
2. The ACO, when needed, can euthanize wild or domestic animals which are injured, sick beyond apparent care, or deemed a nuisance animal. (i.e. skunks and rabid or distempered raccoons)
3. When conducting euthanasia procedures, the ACO will conduct the procedure as prescribed by Title 16/Chapter 24/Part 3 of the State of New Mexico's Animal Sheltering Board guidelines.
4. Exigent Street Euthanasia can be done, by patrol officers on demand, on wild animals that have distemper or some other disease which would disqualify them from going into the FRAS, or have been injured beyond humane care.
 - a. The ACOs will also, upon completion of training, have a 410 shotgun available to them for street or emergency euthanasia.
 - i. There will be a locker placed in the Sergeant's patrol office, locked by a combination lock, where the 410 will be secured.
 - ii. ACOs, upon need of the 410 shotgun, will advise their supervisor of the necessity for the weapon to be issued out to them. If their supervisor is not available they will contact the on-duty supervisor who can also issue the weapon to the ACO. The ACO will take the weapon immediately to the scene where it is needed, utilize it, and return the weapon back to the weapon locker as soon as practical after the event, and before the end of their shift.
 - iii. The combination for the lock will be given to all patrol supervisors as well as DCU, ACU, and Support Services supervisors.
 - iv. All ACOs will complete the New Mexico Game and Fish Hunter's Safety course. They will then complete a manipulation and qualification training. Once the ACOs have all completed the qual course they can begin to use the shotgun to put rabid and distempered skunks and raccoons down.

H. Operational Duties

1. ACOs will be responsible for enforcement of all City Animal Control and Park Ranger ordinances, including citation writing, court prosecution appearances, Parks patrol and impoundment of animals.
2. The ACO will patrol streets within City of Farmington's jurisdiction to locate stray animals and promptly capture animals and transport them, in a timely manner, to the FRAS. All appropriate FRAS paperwork and documents will be fully filled out and signed when required.
3. All ACOs patrol city parks for prevention of vandalism, including graffiti, public relations and enforcement of pertinent ordinances as defined by City Code.
4. ACOs check for proper equipment operation at Parks and Recreation facilities, including at appointed times for Parks and Recreation facilities' security.

5. The ACO responds to complaints concerning animal issues or violations of City Code Chapter 6, including but not limited to animals running at large, bites, property damage, or injuries.
6. ACOs remove dead, injured or dangerous animals from streets and residential premises. They will scan all domestic animals for microchips to try and ascertain ownership. Determine health status of animals and what course of action to take with them.
7. ACOs deliver, can set up, collect, and pick up city owned traps. The traps are for catching feral cats, dogs, and wild animals, i.e. skunks and squirrels. ACOs may take trapped skunks to the FRAS for euthanasia (See Sections G). ACOs have discretion to not transport skunks in unapproved traps, i.e. open mesh designed cages.
8. All ACOs will work an assigned shift, utilizing all of their experience and training to determine what course of action to take and are expected to handle difficult situations. However, if assistance is needed they will contact their chain of command for the help.
9. ACOs maintain normal availability by radio or telephone for response to dispatched calls for service while on-duty. There is no on-call list; however, if an ACO is called out, outside of their normal work period, they will be compensated at one and one-half times their normal hourly rate of pay, and will be paid a minimum of two hours.
10. The ACO carries out duties in conformance with City of Farmington laws and municipal ordinances. Maintains contact with police personnel to coordinate investigation activities and provide mutual assistance during emergency situations.
11. ACOs responding to calls for service can request additional officers when needed, to include other ACOs or patrol officers. They can also call for emergency traffic on the radio (10-33) if needed.
12. ACOs will use excellent customer service skills, establish and maintain effective working relationships with other employees, officials, and all members of the general public.
13. ACOs assist officers in requesting and ensuring vehicle tows are completed at accident scenes and other arrest situations where a vehicle is towed.
14. ACOs will assist certified patrol officers in performing traffic control, such as, accident scene traffic control, special events control, and other similar situations.
15. ACOs can investigate private property non-injury accidents; takes witness and victim statements; writes reports on certain offenses such as gas frauds, lost or stolen property, found or recovered property (such as bicycles), or any other non-arrest type misdemeanor reports.
16. ACOs must maintain confidential departmental information.
17. ACOs can conduct inspections of business licenses within the City of Farmington; inspects food vendors in parks for state and local licenses. They also are responsible for registered private and business kennel inspections.
18. ACOs can issue or renew criminal trespasses within the City of Farmington.
19. ACOs can perform crossing guard duties as needed.

20. ACOs may enforce priority permit holders at Parks facilities.
21. ACOs will maintain departmental equipment, supplies and facilities.
22. ACOs will report to the shift supervisor of their assigned shift if their immediate supervisor is not available.
 - a. Chain of Command
 - District Coordinator Sergeant (or Shift Sergeant)
 - Support Services Lieutenant
 - Support Services Captain
 - Deputy Chief of Operations
 - Chief of Police

I. Animal Control Vehicles –

1. The following shall be followed when operating any City vehicle:
 - a. All personnel driving an ACO unit are required to have in their possession a valid driver's license;
 - b. All Animal Control personnel driving or riding in a ACO unit must wear the proper seat restraint;
 - c. Any damage to any ACO unit (no matter how minor) shall be reported to a supervisor immediately.
 - d. Vehicle keys should be removed from each vehicle at the end of the day. All doors should be locked at the end of the day prior to leaving;
 - e. All Animal Control personnel driving a ACO unit shall obey all laws governing the operation of the motor vehicle, and;
 - f. The use of lights, etc. is only to be used for caution type situations, to encourage motorists to slow down around you or an animal, in a particular situation.
2. Vehicle Maintenance – Employees are responsible for assisting in maintaining ACO units so they are properly equipped, properly maintained, properly refueled, and present a clean appearance. Vehicles must be cleaned and sanitized between each animal transport to prevent the spread of disease.
 - a. All ACO vehicles are to be cleaned out, especially when an animal has caused a contamination of the cage. Make sure all fecal matter has been removed from the vehicle before cleaning, and;
 - b. All ACO units are to be kept clean, free from personal items, debris, and trash at all times.
 - c. Defective Vehicles – When an ACO unit becomes inoperative or in need of repair that affects the safety of the vehicle, that vehicle shall be removed from service for repair. The employee who first becomes aware of the defective condition shall notify a

supervisor, the department fleet manager, and the Municipal Operations Center to schedule the vehicle for repair.

- d. All ACO units are to be parked in the bullpen at the end of shift. The ACOs must also ensure the bullpen is locked upon their exit.

3. Vehicle Equipment – Certain items shall be maintained in the Animal Control vehicles for emergency purposes and to perform routine duties.

- a. The following should be checked and working properly prior to taking the vehicle on the street:

- All rotating/flashing lights;
- All vehicle lights and signals;
- Wipers, brakes, tires and;
- Police radio.

- b. The following is a list of issued equipment; ACO may use other non-issued equipment upon supervisor approval:

- Catch poles;
- Leashes;
- Rope;
- Cages;
- Kennels;
- Animal treats

4. Vehicle Refueling – Absent emergency conditions, ACOs driving animal control vehicles shall not place a vehicle in service that has less than 1/2 tank of fuel.

J. Animal Control Officer Equipment and Uniforms –

1. Animal Control Officers shall wear uniforms issued to them,

- a. Four Duty trousers (brown);
- b. Two long sleeved shirts (Tan);
- c. Four short sleeved shirts (Tan);
- d. One jackets (brown);

- e. One Cap (brown);
 - f. Black footwear (leather boots/ No steel tipped toe) must be worn and is the responsibility of the ACO to keep brushed polished;
 - g. Leather Kevlar gloves;
 - h. Ballistic Vest.
2. Belts and all accessory cases shall be made of black diamond weave leather and shall include the following:
- a. One ASP retractable baton and holster;
 - b. One flashlight and holster;
 - c. One duty belt with belt keepers;
 - d. One can of OC spray and holder;
 - e. One portable radio and holster, and
 - f. One key keeper.
3. Safety Equipment – is issued to the ACO, to be used as needed while handling animals and include:
- a. Safety gloves should be worn when handling calls involving an aggressive animal or any animal in a kennel that appears to be aggressive. Leather Kevlar gloves should be worn when dealing with domestic animal calls and when handling any type of wildlife, and;
 - b. Expandable baton or ASP – The ASP, is a low-profile safety piece of equipment that must be carried by all trained ACO while on duty. The ASP is authorized for use for self-protection against aggressive animals where personal safety or injury is at risk when, based upon the circumstances perceived by the ACO, where lesser force would not reasonably appear to result in the safe control or deterrence of a vicious animal. In the event the ASP causes injury to an animal, the animal will be immediately transported to the FRAS or veterinary clinic for treatment by a Vet.